

TITLE: FOOTWEARBACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION1. Field of the Invention

THIS INVENTION relates to footwear.

5 The invention is particularly suitable for, but is not limited to, sandals, including sandals of the type commonly known as "thongs".

The invention also relates to footwear which can be used as a hand surfer by body surfers.

2. Prior Art

10 While footwear must meet utilitarian requirements to protect the wearer's feet, footwear has long been a fashion item, especially casual footwear for the young. Generally, to be successful, a footwear manufacturer must have some feature, or design component, which is eye-catching and attractive to consumers. While a high recognition trade 15 mark is important, a new entrant into the footwear market can make significant in-roads against well-known brands if they can provide a design feature which catches the consumer's attention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide a striking 20 design concept for footwear, particularly sandals.

It is a preferred object to provide such a design concept which is inexpensive to apply to footwear and which will be attractive to consumers.

It is a further preferred object to combine the tail shapes of surfboards with the shapes of traditional footwear, such as thongs, to provide a significantly different thong (footwear) shapes.

It is a still further preferred object to provide such shapes 5 which further replicate one or more surfboard shape features, including hips or flyers, fins, stringers, leg rope holes, branding, labelling and design aesthetics.

It is a still further preferred object to provide footwear which can be used as hand surfers by body surfers.

10 Other preferred objects will become apparent from the following description.

In one aspect, the present invention resides in footwear, preferably sandals, having a sole, wherein at least the rearward portion of the sole is shaped to replicate the tail shape of a surfboard.

15 Preferably, the underside of the sole incorporates pattern or ornamentation to replicate the one to three fin(s) of a surfboard.

In a preferred embodiment, two or more fin(s) may extend below the sole to form a raised heel portion.

The tail shapes of the surfboards replicated may include (a) 20 "pintail"; (b) "swallow tail"; and (c) "square tail".

The side portions of the soles may incorporate hips or flyers, replicating the hips or flyers in surfboards, to complement the tail shapes.

The shapes may also incorporate a coloured stringer, from

nose to tail, replicating the stringer of a surfboard.

Preferably, the upper side of the sole is provided with a raised heel pad, preferably with added grip, eg., to replicate the deck grip or "gorilla-grip" on a surfboard. Preferably, the heel pad has an 5 inclined forwardly-directed face and a patterned-or-profile upper surface and provides support and/or grip to a wearer's heel.

The sole may incorporate a leg rope hole, or pattern or ornamentation replicating same.

The upper side of the sole may incorporate branding, 10 labelling and other surfboard aesthetics to replicate a surfboard.

In a second aspect, the present invention resides in footwear as hereinbefore described for use as a hand surfer by body surfers.

Preferably, the hand surfer incorporates a wrist strap 15 attachable at one end to the sole and at the other end to the wearer's wrist.

Preferably, the hand surfer has a front strap extending laterally to the sole, adjacent the front end of the sole, engageable by the wearer's hand and/or fingers.

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#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIGS. 1(a) to (g) show respective front, side, top, bottom,

rear, top and bottom perspective views of footwear with a sole replicating a "pintail" surfboard shape, with a single flyer shape, applied to sandals;

FIGS. 2(a) to (g) show similar views of footwear with a sole 5 replicating a "swallow tail" surfboard shape with a single flyer;

FIGS. 3(a) to (g) show similar views of footwear with a sole replicating a "square tail" surfboard shape with a single flyer;

FIGS. 4(a) to (g) show similar views of footwear with a sole replicating a "square tail" surfboard shape with a double flyer;

10 FIGS. 5(a) to (d) show front, side, top and rear views of footwear with a sole replicating a "swallow tail" surfboard shape with a raised heel grip;

FIGS. 6 and 7 are respective top and side views of one embodiment of the foot wear used as a hand surfer;

15 FIGS. 8(a) to (h) are respective side, top, bottom and perspective views of a second embodiment of the footwear used as a hand surfer, a perspective view of the wrist strap and end views showing the fitting of wrist strap.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE

20 PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

As hereinbefore described, the present invention is directed to the design of the sole of footwear, preferably sandal-type footwear such as thongs, to incorporate design features replicating the shapes

and/or aesthetics of surfboards, to produce a striking design concept.

In particular, as will be illustrated in the preferred embodiments to be hereinafter described, the soles may replicate one or more of the following features of surfboards:

- 5                   (a) tail shapes – such as "pin tail", "swallow tail" and "square tail";
- (b) hip or flyers – one or more hips or flyers cut into the side portions to complement the tail shapes (and aesthetics);
- (c) raised heel pad – to provide surfboard-like deck grip,
- 10                  with wearer's heel support, added grip and a longer lasting heel sole;
- (d) fin systems – ornamentation on the underside of the sole replicating a single fin, a twin fin or a tri-fin arrangement;
- (e) leg rope plug – ornamentation replicating a leg rope plug;
- 15                  (f) stringer – ornamentation, central from nose to tail, to replicate the wooden stringer on all surfboards; and
- (g) artistic aesthetics – ornamentation, preferably on the upper side of the sole, to replicate branding, labelling and artistic aesthetics, including signatures/endorsement graphics of champion
- 20                  surfers.

FIGS. 1(a) to (g) show respective front, side, top, side, rear, top perspective and bottom perspective views of a thong-type sandal 10 (for a right foot) where the sole 11 has a rear (or heel) portion 12 shaped

to replicate a "pintail" surfboard shape, with a single flyer 30, and  
ornamentation to replicate a single fin on the under side.

The forward portion 13 of the sole 11, and the straps 14,  
are shown in broken lines, as they may be of known shape and do not  
5 form part of the invention.

It is preferred that the mid-section (arch) 20 of the sole 11  
is broader than for conventional sandals to ensure the sole 11 accurately  
replicates the design features and scale of a surfboard. The broader mid-  
section or arch 20 allows for the provision of one or more side hips or  
10 flyers 30 as the sole tapers to the rear portion options - in this example,  
the "pin tail" shape. The broader mid-section or arch 20 allows for 5 all  
surfboard design shapes and provides sufficient area for the heel and the  
raised heel pad (to be hereinafter described).

A "single fin" 15, eg., of material of contrasting colour, is  
15 moulded or fixed in (or on) the lower face of the rear portion 12 to  
replicate the surfboard fin.

A "legrope hole" 16, which may be an actual hole through  
the sole 11, or a piece of contrasting-colour material moulded in, or fixed  
to, the underside of the sole 11, replicates the legrope hole on a  
20 surfboard. A leg rope, not shown, may extend from the hole 16.

While the embodiment of FIGS. 1(a) to (g) replicates the "pin  
tail" shape with a single flyer (and single fin), the shape can be modified  
to incorporate a pair of flyers, as hereinbefore described with reference to

FIGS. 4(a) to (g), and the ornamentation may replicate twin- or tri-fins.

FIGS. 2(a) to (g) show similar views of a sandal 210 where the rear (or heel) portion 212 of the sole 211 replicates a "swallow tail" surfboard with a V-shape recess 217, a single flyer 230, and 5 ornamentation for a pair of "fins" 215.

FIGS. 3(a) to (g) show similar views of a sandal 410 where the rear (or heel) portion 412 of the sole 411 replicates a "square tali" surfboard, with a single flyer 430, and with ornamentation for three fins 415.

10 It will be readily apparent to the skilled addressee that the "twin fins" 215 and "tri-fins" 415 may extend below the lower faces of the soles 211, 411 to form raised heels.

As hereinbefore described, the sole 11, 211, 411 can be modified to incorporate two flyers (as to be hereinafter described) and 15 ornamentation for single, twin or tri-fins, as desired.

In all three embodiments illustrated in FIGS. 1(a) to (g), 2(a) to (g) and 3(a) to (g), the heel portions 12, 212, 412 are lengthened to enable the three alternative surfboard shapes, which border the heel area, to be replicated. In addition, the additional length allows the provision of 20 the shapes to border a custom raised heel pad, to be hereinafter described with reference to FIGS. 5(a) to (d).

FIGS. 4(a) to (g) show a modified embodiment of the sandal 410 of FIGS. 3(a) to (g).

The sandal 610 has a contrasting colour material "stripe" 620 centred along the upper side of the sole 611, from the toe to the heel, to replicate the wooden stringer along a surfboard – see FIG. 4(c).

As shown in FIG. 4(c), the material replicating the tri-fins 5 615 can extend below the rear portion 612 of the sole 611 (as shown in dashed lines) to form a raised heel portion on the underside of the sole 411.

When comparing the sole 611 of FIG. 4 with the sole 411 of FIG. 3, it will be noted that two hips or flyers 630, 631 are provided 10 along each side of the rear portion 612, whereas the sole 411 only has one hip or flyer 430 per side.

As hereinbefore described, the additional hips or flyers also can be provided on the soles 11, 211 of FIGS. 1 and 2, respectively; while the number of fins replicated on the underside of the sole can be 15 varied.

Referring to FIGS. 5(a) to (d), the sandal 810 has a sole 811 with the "swallow-tail" shape as per the sole 211 of sandal 210 of FIG. 2; but with the twin hips or flyers as per the sole 611 of FIG. 4.

A raised heel grip pad 840 is provided on the upper side of 20 the rear portion 812 and the dimensions illustrated are by way of example only for a (British) size 11 sandal.

The actual shape of the heel grip pad 840 may be varied, but it preferably has a tapered front face 841 and a patterned or textured

top surface 842 to "grip" the wearer's heel, in the same manner as for the deck grip or so-called "gorilla-grip" on surfboards.

The heel grip pad 840 may be provided on any of the sole shapes hereinbefore described (eg., "pin tail"/single- or double-flyer; 5 "square tail"/single or double flyer; "swallow tail"/single- or double-flyer) where the ornamentation can replicate single-, twin or tri-fins and/or the wooden stringer. The heel grip pad 840 is inspired by, and replicates, the deck grip used on surfboards and provides both functionality and aesthetic appeal.

10 The heel grip pad 840 is provided integrally with the sole 811, to provide the raised heel area, which provides a performance advantage offering more heel support than a conventional thong, with added grip to ensure the wearer's heel stays on the raised padded area when running and/or manoeuvring at a walking plus pace.

15 Preferably, the heel grip pad 840 is moulded from a super soft sponge (rubber or plastics) material, ie., softer than the material of the balance of the sole 811, and it may have a slightly concave surface 842 to assist location/grip of the wearer's heel. The top surface 842 of the grip pad 840 may have a wide range of textures/patterns thereon.

20 The raised heel grip pad 840 has the added advantage that it will result in a longer-lasting thong. In addition, the pad 840 further accentuates the accuracy of the sole 810 to replicate a surfboard, in that the pad 840 replicates the deck grip pad on surfboards known as "gorilla-

grip".

The sandals 10, 210, 410, 610, 810 are all comfortable to wear and provide a striking aesthetic appeal to sandals, or other footwear fitted with the soles 11, 211, 411, 611, 811.

5 The shapes illustrated in FIGS. 1 to 5 are by way of examples only and are not limiting to the invention.

By the inclusion (or deletion) of different features, the soles can replicate an almost infinite number of surfboards. Less expensive models may, eg., not include the ornamentation to replicate the fin(s),  
10 stringer and/or leg rope, and/or not include the raised heel grip pad. As features are added, different price ranges can be covered. "Top-of-the-line" models can include all of the features described/illustrated, and may further include a wide range of branding/labelling/aesthetic options.  
"Limited edition" or "Signature" boards can include the  
15 signatures/endorsements of champion surfers/board shapes/manufacturers. The range of alternative colours/graphics is almost limitless.

The marriage of surfboard shapes to footwear results in a unique, striking design concept with the ability to appeal to consumers  
20 generally, and not just dedicated surfers.

In addition, the incorporation of the raised heel grip pad provides a functionally-improved product, for the reasons hereinbefore described.

The invention is not limited to the thong-type sandals shown, but can be applied to all other sandals, and indeed, to other types of footwear.

Referring to FIGS. 6, 7 and 8, the footwear hereinbefore  
5 described with reference to FIGS. 1 to 5 can be used as a hand surfer for  
body surfers.

A hand surfer is a water craft that is worn on the left or right hand of a swimmer to assist in surfing waves.

Generally, a hand surfer has a broad plastic or foam  
10 structure that is secured to the hand by straps to assist in planing  
advantage.

To ride waves without the assistance of any craft is called body surfing. When body surfing, the surfer catches a wave and uses  
their torso and hands to aquaplane straight down from the face of the  
15 wave. To body surf, the surfer needs speed and body area to keep on top of the water surface and travel along the wave.

The more experienced body surfers ride waves going left or right on the face of the wave. Body surfing across the face of the wave enables the body surfer to reach faster speeds and experience getting  
20 tubed or barrelled – this is when the wave throws a sheet of water over the experienced body surfer. The experienced body surfer rides the more powerful part of the wave and needs to keep himself/herself in perfect planing position and resist against being pushed into the bottom of the

wave which, in turn, means the end of the ride.

Experienced body surfers can be assisted by a hand surfer worn on the left or right and. When body surfing with a hand surfer, it offers the body surfer a controlled planing area to assist in 5 manoeuvrability, planing ability and length of ride. Body surfers using the hand surfer can travel distances similar to surfboards whilst riding across waves. The hand surfers are a performance craft made specially for the body surfers.

The footwear of the present invention can be used as a hand 10 surfer to assist in aquaplaning performance for the body surfers.

Referring to FIGS. 6 and 7, the hand surfer 1010 of a first embodiment has a sole 1011 having any of the shapes/ornamentations as hereinbefore described with reference to FIGS. 1 to 5, eg., a square tail 1012 with a single flyer 1030.

15 Preferably, the leg rope is replaced by the wrist strap 1070, which is anchored at one end to the sole 1011, eg., at the leg rope hole, and at the other end is releasably connectable (eg., by "VELCRO" trade mark) tape) about the wearer's wrist 1090.

As shown, the wearer places his hand 1091 under the front 20 strap 1014 adjacent the forward end of the sole 1011, eg., with the thumb 1092 and index finger 1093 on one side of the toe strap 1014a and the remaining fingers 1094-1096 on the other side.

The lightweight waterproof material of the sole 1011 is

buoyant, to provide both flotation and planing benefits. The unique surfboard tail shapes of the sole 1011 enables it to aquaplane on top of the water, with a surfboard-like response due to the shape of the rear portion 1012 of the sole 1011. The flyer(s) 1030 also assist in providing  
5 the surfboard-like response.

The wrist strap 1070 works in the same manner as the leg rope of a surfboard. The wrist strap 1070 ensures that the hand surfer 1010 stays attached to the wearer whilst body surfing and/or after any "wipe outs".

10 As the sole 1011 has a greater surface area than the wearer's hand 1091, and is broader, it offers a greater planing advantage than the hand alone.

15 The footwear is easy to fit and secure to the hand 1091 and instantly becomes a hand surfer when applied. As shown, the hand surfer 1010 is easily fitted to the hand 1092 and final positioning and holding can be effected by the thumb 1092 and little finger 1096. The toe strap 1014a between the index and second fingers 1093, 1094 provides lateral location of the hand surfer 1010 relative to the wearer's hand 1092. When finished body surfing, the wearer can remove the  
20 wrist strap 1070 and use the hand surfer 1010 as footwear.

FIGS. 8(a) to (h) illustrate a second embodiment of the hand surfer 1210, where the heel portion 1212 of the sole 1211 is of the "swallow tail" shape with a single flyer 1230.

In this embodiment, the wrist strap 1270 is a length of cord or rope 1271 with a loop 1272 at one end and a locking pin 1273 at the other end.

As shown in FIGS. 8(a), (b), (d) and (e), the cord or rope 5 1271 is passed through loop 1272 to form an adjustable loop to be secured to the wearer's wrist (not shown).

The locking pin 1273 is inserted through the leg rope hole 1216 (see FIG. 8(f)); located transversely below the heel portion 1212 of the sole 1211 (see FIG. 8(g)); and the cord 1271 is pulled to locate the 10 locking pin 1273 against the underside of the sole 1211 (see FIG. 8(h)).

To release the wrist strap 1270, the steps of FIGS. 8(f) to (h) are reversed.

The dual capability of the present invention, ie., footwear/hand surfer, is unique due to the surfboard tail shapes 15 replicated in the heel portions of the soles of the footwear.

Various changes and modifications may be made to the embodiments described and illustrated without departing from the present invention.